



# The American GARDENER®

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Beautiful, Durable  
Baptisias

Coniferous  
Groundcovers

Agaves for Small  
Spaces

## Dynamic Duets for Shade



## REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SHADE PLANT COMBINATIONS

Knowing that plant recommendations vary from region to region, I asked experts from around the country to weigh in on some of their favorite, eye-catching plant combinations for shade. —K.W.

### NORTHEAST

**Jerry Fritz**, owner of Linden Hill Gardens and Jerry Fritz Garden Design in Ottsville, Pennsylvania (USDA Zone 6), recommends the following combinations.

■ Golden tufted sedge (*Carex elata* 'Aurea') and forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*): an eye-catching combo of gold and blue for moist, shady areas.

■ *Ligularia dentata* 'Britt Marie Crawford' with *Lysimachia nummularia* 'Aurea' and *Brunnera macrophylla*. The bold leaves of this ligularia work well with her favorite blue-and-gold color pairing.

■ *Symphytum xuplandicum* 'Axminster Gold' with *Actaea racemosa* 'Black Negligee' and bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*): Dependable, deer-resistant trio provides a long season of beauty.

■ *Rodgersia podophylla* and purple violet (*Viola labradorica*): A wonderful deer-resistant pair for shade.



Barrenwort (*Epimedium* sp.) combines well with a variety of plants and thrives in dry shade.

### MIDWEST

Indiana-based **Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp** (USDA Zone 5), editor of *Indiana Living Green* magazine, offers this list of dazzling performers for shade.

■ Golden Japanese forest grass (*Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola') with coral bells (*Heuchera* spp.): For a golden spot in the shade, mix the forest grass with any of the golden or chartreuse coral bells. For contrast, combine with any purple-leaved coral bells.

■ Barrenworts (*Epimedium* spp.) with *Corydalis lutea* or *C. flexuosa* 'Blue Panda': The lacy foliage of corydalis is the perfect foil for the heart-shaped leaves of barrenwort—one of the best groundcovers for dry shade.

■ *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle' with *Astilbe chinensis* 'Purple Candles': This textural combination also offers winter interest with decorative flower heads.

■ *Carex conica* 'Marginata' and heucheras: This evergreen combo mixes two distinct textures—narrow blades of variegation with the bolder scalloped leaves of heucheras.

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AND PACIFIC NORTHWEST

**Laura Livengood Schaub**, an award-winning landscape designer in San Jose, California (USDA Zone 8), has had great success with these combinations in her own gardens and those of her clients.

■ Bugleweed (*Ajuga* 'Chocolate Chip') with *Lamium* 'Cannon Gold': A wonderful dark-and-gold groundcover combination for moist shade.

■ *Heuchera* 'Amethyst Myst' with golden dwarf sweet flag (*Acorus gramineus* 'Ogon'): Offers glorious color and texture contrast year-round in a protected spot.

■ White cyclamen with *Liriope* 'Silver Dragon': This sparkling combination lights up the shade garden, especially in winter.

■ Giant chain fern (*Woodwardia fimbriata*) with bacopa (*Sutera cordata*): The tall fern with the flowing groundcover is simply spectacular, especially on a shady slope or near water.

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND SOUTHWEST

Los Angeles-based **Shirley Bovshow** (USDA Zone 8B), garden designer and host of the online weekly "Garden World Report" show, recommends these dynamic combos for shade.

■ Variegated shell ginger (*Alpinia zerumbet* 'Variegata') with *Cordyline* 'Jurred': The tropical ginger in yellow and green is striking against the maroon color of the cordyline.

■ *Chiastophyllum oppositifolium* with *Sedum spathulifolium* 'Capo Blanco': These succulents are stunning as a simple, sculptural combination for hot climates.

■ Mirror bush (*Caprosma repens* 'Pink Splendor') with New Zealand flax (*Phormium* 'Dark Delight' or *Phormium* 'Platt's Black') and rain lilies (*Zephyranthes candida*): With its evergreen leaves in shades of green, yellow and pink, mirror bush provides the perfect backdrop to the contrasting grasslike foliage of the dark phormium underplanted with the rich green rain lily.

### SOUTHEAST

Horticulturist **Katie Elzer-Peters**, a garden consultant and freelance writer with the Garden of Words, L.L.C. in Wilmington, North Carolina (USDA Zone 7B/8), suggests these combinations for the southeastern United States.

■ Colchicums (*Colchicum* spp.) and black mondo grass (*Ophiopogon planiscapus*): The dark grass serves as a dramatic foil to the fall-blooming bulbs peeking up through the groundcover.

■ Cast-iron plant (*Aspidistra elatior*) with barrenwort (*Epimedium* spp.): Both grow well in dry shade and bring added textural interest.

■ Blue stars (*Amsonia* spp.) and hostas: Great combo for light shade, the amsonia's lacy texture contrasts beautifully with the broad leaves of the hostas.

■ *Ajuga* 'Bronze Beauty' with any sedge (*Carex* spp.): The broad, short, coppery-colored leaves of ajuga work well with the wispy texture of sedges.